

November 6, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) sent a letter to his colleagues in the House of Representatives today urging them to continue their support for south Louisiana and vote to override the President's veto of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA).

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) sent a letter to his colleagues in the House of Representatives today urging them to continue their support for south Louisiana and vote to override the President's veto of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA). WRDA had previously passed both Houses of Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support, securing a vote of 381-40 in the House and 81-12 in the Senate. The House is scheduled to vote on overriding the President's veto later today, which will require the support of a two-thirds majority of all Members voting in order to be successful (287 "yea" votes if all Members are present and voting).

In his letter, Rep. Melancon wrote, **"Today I ask you to join me for one of the most important votes tied to the successful recovery in Louisiana. The Water Resources and Development Act contains several critical authorizations for South Louisiana, including the closure of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (dubbed the 'Hurricane Highway' after Katrina) which funneled deadly flood waters into the heart of eastern New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, destroying thousands of homes and devastating these communities."**

Rep. Melancon continued, **"Also authorized in WRDA is the comprehensive hurricane protection system known as Morganza to the Gulf, a 64-mile system of levees, locks and floodgates planned for south Louisiana. Morganza would offer hurricane protection to about 120,000 people in south Louisiana who currently have no defense against storms and are like sitting ducks in the path of the next killer hurricane."**

Finally, Rep. Melancon noted, **"In addition to these vital hurricane protection projects, WRDA also includes a comprehensive coastal restoration plan that will authorize projects to rebuild the protective wetlands along Louisiana's coast. When I travel across south Louisiana, I see with my own eyes how our rich marshes and wetlands are disappearing. Louisiana loses a football field-sized piece of land to the sea every 35 minutes. During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we lost over 200 square miles of coastline. Our state is literally washing away into the Gulf of Mexico.... The [Louisiana Coastal Area plan] is a responsible plan that ensures the marshes and wetlands that buffer our coast from storms are protected, as well as the infrastructure that provides for over 20% of the nation's oil and gas production and the habitat for 30% of the seafood consumed in the United States."**

A fully copy of the letter is at the end of this release.

Included in the WRDA bill the President vetoed is full authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane and Storm Protection System. This 64-mile system of levees, locks and floodgates will provide hurricane and flood protection to about 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes who currently have no hurricane protection. Congressman Melancon has made Morganza to the Gulf one of his top priorities in Congress, and has secured assurances from his leadership that this vital project would not be removed from WRDA bill.

WRDA also authorizes \$90 million to bring the federal levees in the South Lafourche Levee District up to 100-year protection, which will offer better protection to residents in the parish and make their homes eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program.

Also, WRDA authorizes up to \$100 million to consolidate the scattered levees in lower Jefferson Parish into a comprehensive hurricane protection system for the town of Lafitte.

In addition, WRDA authorizes approximately \$1.9 billion for the Corps of Engineers to carry out the comprehensive program for the restoration of the Louisiana Coastal Area. This program will help restore populated and coastal areas significantly impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and will help in preventing future damage from hurricanes and storm surge, by slowing the continuing land loss, and replenishing the coastal marshes of southern

Louisiana. The bill also authorizes the Corps to integrate into this comprehensive program the findings of a current Corps study for "category 5" protection for coastal Louisiana.

Finally, WRDA deauthorizes and calls for the physical closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet ("MR-GO"), the 76-mile ship channel through St. Bernard Parish that has been dubbed the "hurricane highway." Rep. Melancon has long advocated in Congress for the complete closure of MR-GO because of the environmental degradation it has caused in St. Bernard Parish and the threat it poses to the parish's residents. Shortly after the Katrina, Rep. Melancon worked in Congress to pass legislation to stop any further dredging of the MRGO to ensure that the channel could begin to silt in while the Corps came up with a plan for the MRGO's long-term future.

Congress is supposed to pass a new WRDA bill every two years. However, no new WRDA bills have been signed into law since 2000 because the House and Senate have repeatedly been unable to reach a compromise on the legislation since then. As a result, many vital projects in south Louisiana have been stalled, awaiting authorization from Congress.

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Please Continue to Support Hurricane Protection for South Louisiana

November 6, 2007

Dear Colleagues,

In the two years since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast I have been honored to serve with members that have responded so promptly and compassionately to the needs of my state and its neighbors.

Today I ask you to join me for one of the most important votes tied to the successful recovery in Louisiana. The Water Resources and Development Act contains several critical authorizations for South Louisiana, including the closure of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (dubbed the "Hurricane Highway" after Katrina) which funneled deadly flood waters into the heart of eastern New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, destroying thousands of homes and devastating these communities. While funding to close the MR-GO has already been appropriated by Congress, Louisiana is still waiting for the official de-authorization contained in WRDA to begin work on closing this residential and environmental menace and further protect them from another Katrina.

Also authorized in WRDA is the comprehensive hurricane protection system known as Morganza to the Gulf, a 64-mile system of levees, locks and floodgates planned for south Louisiana. Morganza would offer hurricane protection to about 120,000 people in south Louisiana who currently have no defense against storms and are like sitting ducks in the path of the next killer hurricane. This hurricane protection system is so critical; the local communities have been taxing themselves for years to try to build parts of the levee system on their own. But they need the federal government to be a partner in this project, and have anxiously followed the progress of WRDA for years, hoping for full authorization for

Morganza.

In addition to these vital hurricane protection projects, WRDA also includes a comprehensive coastal restoration plan that will authorize projects to rebuild the protective wetlands along Louisiana's coast. When I travel across south Louisiana, I see with my own eyes how our rich marshes and wetlands are disappearing. Louisiana loses a football field-sized piece of land to the sea every 35 minutes. During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we lost over 200 square miles of coastline. Our state is literally washing away into the Gulf of Mexico. The Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) restoration and protection projects authorized by WRDA are part of a comprehensive plan that uses peer review to ensure that the latest engineering and technology be used. LCA is a responsible plan that ensures the marshes and wetlands that buffer our coast from storms are protected, as well as the infrastructure that provides for over 20% of the nation's oil and gas production and the habitat for 30% of the seafood consumed in the United States.

WRDA is the result of very dedicated work and painstaking compromise from the members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. I would like to extend my appreciation for their steadfast dedication to this legislation and humbly request that all my colleagues support the successful recovery of Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf Coast by voting to override the President's veto and passing WRDA with an overwhelming bi-partisan vote.

Sincerely,

Charlie Melancon

Member of Congress

